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Police veterans with reform chops emerge as potential NYPD commissioner picks for Mamdani

Rodney Harrison, left, and Isa Abbassi. (Luiz C. Ribeiro for New York Daily News; NYPD)

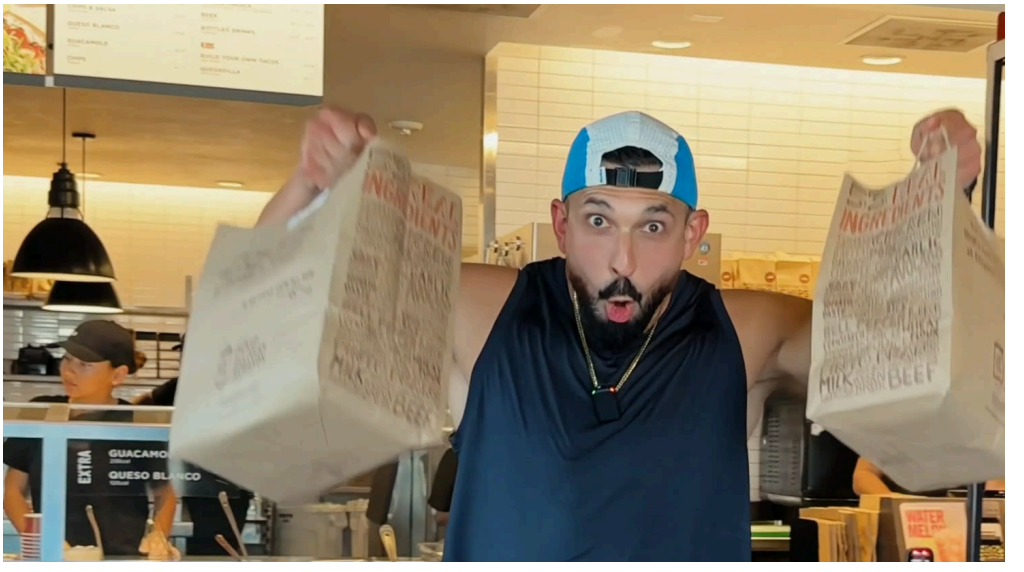
At least two law enforcement experts with deep experience in police reform efforts are emerging as possible contenders to become Democratic mayoral nominee Zohran Mamdani's choice for NYPD commissioner should he win next month's election, the Daily News has learned.

The two potential picks — Rodney Harrison and Isa Abbassi — both previously served in senior capacities at the NYPD and are being looked at by Mamdani's team as potential candidates for the city's top cop job, two sources familiar with the matter said this week. A third source close to Mamdani said Tracie Keesee, another NYPD veteran with extensive law enforcement experience, is being eyed as a possible commissioner candidate, too, though a campaign insider said she hasn't spoken directly with anyone from his team.

Zohran Mamdani is pictured at a press conference Friday, Oct. 10, 2025 in Manhattan, New York, New York. (Barry Williams / New York Daily News)

The selection process is still in its infancy, and the sources stressed nothing has been finalized. They also said Mamdani remains open to considering

appointments as mayor, as some in law enforcement circles have been unnerved by Mamdani's past calls to defund the NYPD and claim that the department itself is "racist." As a mayoral candidate, the democratic socialist has said he plans to apologize for his previously harsh criticism of the department and that he would as mayor seek to keep NYPD funding flat, not cut it.



In public, Mamdani has said he's considering keeping Tisch, Mayor Adams' NYPD commissioner, at the helm of the nation's largest police force, praising her this week for her "decisive action to uproot corruption at the upper echelons at the NYPD and her presiding over lower levels of crime across this city."

"And as soon as I have any personnel commitments I'll be sure to let you know," he said Tuesday.

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PR professional Ken Frydman, citing sources, said on the POTUS SiriusXM political talk show earlier this week that he didn't expect Mamdani to keep Tisch on, though.

Mayor Eric Adams and Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch attend a press conference at police headquarters in Manhattan, New York City on Thursday, Sept. 18, 2025. (Gardiner Anderson / New York Daily News)

And as he's polling as the favorite to win the Nov. 4 mayoral election, Mamdani's team has started looking at other candidates for the job of overseeing the country's largest police force, with Harrison and Abbassi

Suffolk County Police commissioner, a job in which he was credited with leading the investigation that resulted in last year's arrest of accused Long Island serial killer Rex Heuermann.

In an interview last week, Harrison confirmed he spoke with Mamdani recently and has reviewed his public safety plans, including his proposal to create a city Department of Community Safety that would be tasked with responding to mental health calls that cops currently handle. Harrison has also publicly offered praise for Mamdani's Department of Community Safety plan.

But Harrison stressed he has not been told anything about an NYPD commissioner appointment.

"There's been no discussion, he has not made an offer and I haven't asked him if I could be considered," he told The News. "It's just been more of me trying to help him have a plan in place when it comes to some strategies. All that has happened is he's been asking me my opinion on certain things."

Eduardo Munoz Alvarez/AP

Suffolk County Police Commissioner Rodney Harrison.

Abbassi, currently New Jersey's public safety monitor overseeing troubled

Harrison, Abbassi and Keesee all share similar backgrounds in that they have long records of engaging in both traditional police work and more reform-minded initiatives.

As the NYPD's chief of patrol, Harrison, a 26-year veteran of the department, oversaw the 2018 implementation of the de Blasio administration's Neighborhood Policing Program, which focused on increasing interaction between officers and the communities they serve.

Abbassi, also a 26-year department veteran, served in a variety of NYPD positions before retiring in 2023 with the rank of chief of strategic initiatives. After his retirement, Abbassi was hand-picked by the New Jersey state attorney general's office to serve as the independent officer-in-charge of the Patterson Police Department, which has for years reeled from corruption and misconduct accusations.

Bill de Blasio and Isa Abbassi in 2020. (Photo by BRYAN R. SMITH/AFP via Getty Images)

The New Jersey AG promoted him in 2024 to become the statewide public safety monitor, in charge of overseeing several troubled police departments and promulgate best practices.

deputy commissioner for equity and inclusion between 2016 and 2019. She was a captain at the Denver Police Department for 25 years prior to that and has also worked on several public safety think-tanks focused on police reform.

She's currently a public safety professor at the University of Virginia.

With Evan Simko-Bednarski and Josephine Stratman

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